



After Your Dialysis Access Procedure

A fistula is a natural connection between an artery and vein. A graft is a synthetic connection between an artery and vein.

It takes a few weeks for a fistula or graft to heal well enough to be used for dialysis: about 12 weeks for a fistula; about 2 to 3 weeks for a graft.

How to care for your incision

1. You may shower on the evening you had surgery. Let the water run over the incision. Pat it dry.
2. It is normal for the incision to be tender, slightly swollen, and bruised. Your incision will be closed with stitches (sutures) placed below your skin. These dissolve after 1 or 2 months. The incision will also be sealed with a water-tight glue in the operating room. No other dressings will be necessary.
3. Notify your surgeon if you develop:
 - increased heat, redness, or swelling of the incision
 - pus drainage from the incision
 - temperature above 101 degrees Fahrenheit
Check your temperature daily for the next 7 days.
 - no vibration or “buzzing” feeling in the fistula/graft
 - if your hand becomes painful, numb, or cold

If you have symptoms and don’t know if you should call, it is best to call.

The transplant surgeon on call can be reached through the transplant floor nursing station 24 hours a day (301-496-1009). Say that you have a problem related to recent surgery and that you need to speak to the surgeon on call.

4. The glue used to seal the incision will begin to flake off after about a week. This is normal.

Special Instructions

- Do not restrict the blood flow through the fistula/graft. Avoid wearing tight clothing, hanging things over your arm, or carrying heavy things with the arm in which the fistula/graft was placed.

Special Instructions

- Check for blood flow through the fistula/graft several times a day. You can do this by feeling for a vibration or “buzzing” feeling over the fistula/graft. (This is also known as a “thrill.”)
- If artificial graft material was **not** used for your fistula, exercise your arm for 10 to 15 minutes several times a day. You can do this simply by squeezing a rubber ball or lifting a 1-pound weight, such as a soup can. This will help the vein enlarge. You can begin this exercise when you do not feel discomfort from your surgery, usually in 3 to 5 days.
- Do not sleep on the AV graft or fistula.
- Do not let anyone take your blood pressure or take blood from the arm with the dialysis access.

Activity

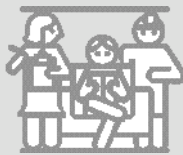
You can resume your regular activity as soon as you are able. You may drive as long as you are not taking prescription pain medication.

Medications

You will be given a prescription for pain medication when you leave the hospital. For mild pain, Tylenol or Extra Strength Tylenol is usually enough.

Appointments

We will schedule an appointment for you to return to the clinic in 7 to 10 days. At this appointment, we check your incision and see how the fistula or graft is working.



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